

JULY 6, 1972

Progress is changing the names of the months in the Shortgrass Country. June was once known as early summer; or, to the Indians, as the moon the marriage promises were gallowed. Today June is brush killer's month or the Moon of Wilting Mesquite Leaves. Aerial spraying reaches full force in the period; 40 to 45 day are spent attacking the mesquite trees. Money is used up in hitherto unknown proportions.

Across all of Texas, brush experts have developed in numbers that threaten to crowd out the thickets. Colleges and private industry have turned out specialists that could eventually spread test spots which could turn all of ranchdom into a field laboratory. Wood stakes and other forms of markers are already crowding out some of the brush. State supported vehicles are also thinning out a sizable amount of mesquites, going to and from the test sites.

Good results are beginning to show up from verbal defoliation. So many brush control meetings have been held that sturdy trees are starting to wilt from the over-splash of the speeches and lectures. Mesquites measuring 12 inches in diameter have been observed losing their old sap and vigor. Symptoms resemble the acute drowsiness that voters suffer during election years. However, this is the first instance that the illness has ever been noticed in plants or shrubbery.

Chemical salesmen, in particular, have become so forceful their spiels defoliate both obnoxious and beneficial plants. Drift off their sales talk is effective downwind for 1500 to 2000 feet.

I had to ask a salesman to be careful close to the ranch house. Oral defoliation will knock a shade tree as fast as it will a mesquite. As hot as it's been, I sure don't want to lose the shade at the house. You just can't take a chance with anything as powerful as that can be.

The brush experts that have been by the ranch fit a pattern. Brush killers roam at night, like wild cow hunters and old Indian fighters. Ten p.m. until midnight is their favorite time to contact ranchers.

They feel that the late hours are the time to set up appointments or to obligate the herder to contract a few thousand acres. At the peak of the activity, I could have spent the budget of four big government agencies without leaving the pallet that I put by the telephone.

Products and services were working so fantastic by telephone that the vines on the window by my desk shriveled and died. The complete force of the Bureau of Forestry could not have withstood the blast of chemical action that was being unleashed via the wire. I got so tired of listening to one fellow that I finally told him we'd traded the ranch for an organic chicken farm in the unmapped jungles of South America, and that if the chickens ever got hung up in a tree, I was going to cut down the tree with an ax and wring the chickens' necks for being so stupid.

Brush experts are winning the battle against mesquite. In three more centuries, mesquite is going to be sorry it ever stole so much land.

Bright days are ahead for us herders. If brush gets too thick, we can always ask President Nixon to back ship us on the boats that are bringing in foreign beef. I kind of think he's got that on his mind anyway.